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Application No. 10/811,168
Filed: March 26, 2004
TC Art Unit: 3677
Confirmation No.: 1995REMARKS

In the most recent Office Action, claims 1, 3 and 24-37 were pending. Claims 1, 3, 26-28, 30-34 and 36-37 are rejected. Claims 24-25, 29 and 35 are objected to.

In response, claims 1, 26 and 32 are amended. Accordingly, claims 1, 3 and 24-37 are pending in the application. No new matter is added.

Applicant responds to the comments in the Office Action as follows:

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

The Office Action states that claims 1, 3, 26-28, 30-34 and 36-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C §103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese patent document 2001-61514(JP '514) in view of Galbreath (U.S. Patent No. 6,138,330). In particular, the Office Action states that while JP '514 fails to disclose an integral disengagement device, the same is taught by Galbreath in an obvious combination. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claims 1, 26 and 32 are amended to recite that the disengagement device displaces a central arm, an engagement part that retains the first and second buckle members together or an engagement structure that contributes to retaining the buckle

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members together, respectively. The engagement parts or engagements structures recited in claims 26 and 32, respectively, are defined to be engaged with a cooperative engagement part or to be free from engagement. Similarly, one of the first or second latches defined on the central arm is free from engagement when the buckle is clasped.

The above elements are not disclosed or suggested in JP '514 or Galbreath, either alone or in combination. The disengagement structure apparently shown in JP '514 is not integral with either of the buckle members. In addition, actuation of the disengagement device apparently shown in JP '514 does not displace the central arm or an engagement structure or engagement part, as defined in the claims, to disengage cooperative engagement structures or parts in the clasped buckle. The disclosure by Galbreath similarly fails to disclose or suggest displacement of a central arm or engagement structures or parts, as defined in the claims, to disengage the cooperative engagements involved in clasping the buckle.

The configuration of the safety buckle recited in the claims of the present application is unique and advantageous over the configurations described in JP '514 and Galbreath, since the buckle according to the present claims is useful as a child

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resistant clasp that is intuitive and simple for an adult to operate. In addition, by permitting the central arm or engagement parts to be displaced to disengage the cooperative engagements that retain the buckle together, the buckle can be manufactured with greater tolerance for adverse conditions that may exist with typical child seats and child restraints, including extreme outdoor environments, compressive and impact loading and abusive and inappropriate buckle usages. For example, the buckle clasp configuration illustrated in Galbreath is prone to jamming or becoming unworkable so that it is difficult to unclasp under the adverse conditions described above. Similarly, the buckle described in JP '514 is not intuitive for a user that is concerned about freeing a child from a child seat restraint.

For all of the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 26 and 32 should be allowable over the cited prior art references of JP '514 and Galbreath, either alone or in combination, and respectfully request that the rejection of those claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claims 3, 27-28, 30-31, 33-34 and 36-37 ultimately depend upon and further limit claims 1, 26 and 32, and should be allowable for the same reasons that the independent claims are allowable and also because of the further limitations recited in

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the dependent claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claims 3, 27-28, 30-31, 33-34 and 36-37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP '514 in view of Galbreath is overcome and respectfully requests that it be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and discussion, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is now in condition for allowance earnestly solicits notice to that effect.

The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney to discuss any matter that would expedite allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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